

SOLDIERS of the NAPOLEONIC WARS

By BRYAN FOSTEN

French Imperial Guard
Infantry, June 1815

(5) Paris and Waterloo



Sergeant Major of the 1st Regiment Grenadiers à Pied. Note that the bearskin cords are gold and yellow and the red epaulettes are decorated with gold braid with gold fringing over and under the red fringing in layers.

55p

\$2.00 (USA & Canada)

Almark Publications



Napoleon salutes his troops at the historic 'Field of May' on June 1, 1815. Napoleon wears Imperial dress. The Grenadiers à Pied of the Guard are drawn up in the background.

Paris and Waterloo

ON April 5, 1814 the Emperor Napoleon of France was forced to abdicate and after formally surrendering his sword the decision was taken to send him in exile to the Island of Elba. He was permitted to take a tiny personal bodyguard with him and selected contingents from the Imperial Guard including Foot Grenadiers, Foot Chasseurs, Artillery, Sappers, Marines, Mounted Chasseurs and Lancers. This was the so-called 'Elba Guard' which was to form the nucleus of the resurrected Imperial Guard during the Hundred Days.

After a frustrating and boring year in exile Napoleon escaped on February 26, 1815, and landed once more on the mainland of France at the Golfe-Juan. The Elba Contingent, which naturally accompanied his return, included three companies each of the Foot Grenadiers and Foot Chasseurs.

The subsequent march through France to Paris, the deposition of Louis XVIII, the triumphal arrival in the capital and the almost casual re-possession of the Imperial

Throne was accomplished under the shadow of the Congress of Vienna which was shocked to hear the news that the 'Ogre of Europe' was back in command of France once more. The re-acclaimed Emperor was soon firmly back on the Throne and had started to re-assemble his Army including his beloved Guard.

As early as March 13, 1815 the Guard was re-constituted and the foreign Regiments elevated by Louis to Guard status had been removed. By the 28th the Emperor had recalled most of the old half-pay soldiers of the Guard to the colours and had put into motion the creation of additional regiments of 'Young Guard' forming them into regiments of 'Tirailleurs' and 'Voltigeurs' of the Grenadiers and Chasseurs respectively.

By the first week in April the Emperor had issued decrees giving the new Guard its establishment and had appointed General Count Drouot as its 'Aide-Major'. General Count Friant was appointed Colonel of the Foot Grenadiers with old General Count Roguet as his second

in command and General Count Morand was given the command of the Foot Chasseurs with General Count Michel as his deputy.

Napoleon used all his skill to organise an army which could rival the combined forces of the Allied Sovereigns. The National Guard was re-organised and divided into battalions to garrison the permanent fortresses of provincial France. New Line Regiments were raised, armed, clothed, and where time permitted, issued with new badges and buttons. On June 1 the grand ceremony of the presentation of the new eagles and flags took place on the 'Champs de Mars' in Paris and by the 15th the

Northern section of the great French Army was on the move. The Northern Army included all the Infantry of the Guard with the exception of the 6th 'Tirailleurs' and the 6th 'Voltigeurs' who were combined in a Division under General Count Bruyer and sent on duty to the Vendée. The Northern Army marched towards the River Sambre and the Low Countries. Facing them was a powerful force comprising an Anglo-Allied Army under the command of the Duke of Wellington and a Prussian Army commanded by Prince Blücher.

The stage was set for Napoleon's last campaign in which his beloved Imperial Guard were to be all but destroyed.

The Strength and Composition of the Infantry of the Imperial Guard during the Waterloo Campaign, June 1815

The Old Guard (La Vielle Garde)

The Corps of Foot Grenadiers (Grenadiers à Pied)

First Division (Lt General Count Friant).†

1st Regiment (Marechal de Camp Petit).

1st Battalion (Major Loubers).

2nd Battalion (Major Combes).

2nd Regiment (Marechal de Camp Christiani).

1st Battalion (Major Martenot – Chadelais de Courdoux).

2nd Battalion (Cdt Colzio).

Second Division (Lt General Count Roguet).

3rd Regiment (Marechal de Camp Poret).*

1st Battalion (Cdt Guillemain).

2nd Battalion (Cdt Belcourt).

4th Regiment (Marechal de Camp D'Harlet).*

1st and 2nd Battalions combined (Major Lafargue).

The Corps of Foot Light Infantry (Chasseurs à Pied)

First Division (Lt General Count Morand).

1st Regiment (Marechal de Camp Cambronne).

1st Battalion (Major Duuring).

2nd Battalion (Major Lamouret).

2nd Regiment (Marechal de Camp Pelet).

1st Battalion (Major Colomban).

2nd Battalion (Major Mompez).

Second Division (General Count Michel).

3rd Regiment (Marechal de Camp Malet).*

1st Battalion (Major Cardinal).

2nd Battalion (Major Angelet).

4th Regiment (Marechal de Camp Henrion).*

1st Battalion and Second Battalion combined (Major Agnès).

The Young Guard (La Jeune Garde)

Overall Divisional Commander of both the 1st and 2nd Divisions General Count Duhésme. *The 2nd Division was not at Waterloo.*

1st Divisional Field Commander (General Count Barrois).

1st Brigade (Marechal de Camp Chartrand).

*1st Regiment of Tirailleurs** (Col Trappier de Malcolm).

2 battalions (commanders' names not ascertained).

1st Regiment of Voltigeurs† (Colonel Secrétan).

2 battalions (commanders' names not ascertained).

2nd Brigade (Marechal de Camp Guy Marquis de Rios Molanos, later General Guye).

3rd Regiment of Tirailleurs (Colonel Pailhès).

2 battalions (commanders' names not ascertained).

3rd Regiment of Voltigeurs (Lt Col Hurel).

2 battalions (commanders' names not ascertained).

* These regiments were known as the Middle Guard (La Moyenne Garde) although never officially.

† Note also that French Historians sometimes bracket the 1st Regiment of Grenadiers with the 1st Regiment of Chasseurs and so on as Divisions.

* Sharpshooters.
† Light troops.



Grenadiers à Pied of the Imperial Guard march past Napoleon and his staff officers on the road to Waterloo. Note the carrying position for the musket on the march. The NCOs carry their muskets at the shoulder.

The Preliminaries

The Imperial Guard began its march from Paris and reached the town of Avesnes on June 13. At the same time Lt General Count Lobau marched and Lt General Count D'Erlon began to move from Lille. Lt General Count Reille moved from Valenciennes and Lt General Count Vandamme from Mézières.

All these Corps together with the four Corps of Cavalry began to move towards the frontier with the Low Countries concentrating on the River Sambre, south of Charleroi. The enthusiasm of the troops was high and the Staff were excited to see that the Emperor's genius for organisation and staff work had not deteriorated during his years absence for the whole vast congregation of troops arrived at their mobilisation point at almost the same time.

On the 14th the French Army bivouacked along the banks of the River Sambre with D'Erlon and Reille on the left of the line, and Vandamme and Lobau in the centre. The Guard, together with the Cavalry Reserve and Gérard were on the right.

That night they lit their camp fires on the reversed side of the slope of the south bank of the river in the hope that they would conceal their presence from the Prussian cavalry vedettes who had been seen patrolling the far side. On the morning of June 15, the French Army started out

to cross the river into Belgium. Almost at once the advance troops came into contact with the outlying vedettes of the 1st Prussian Army Corps under Lt General Von Zeiten. They pushed the Prussian screen of scouts in and despite skirmishing attacks on their flanks began to drive forward in three great columns, preceded by their own scouting cavalry and flanked by clouds of Sharpshooters. The French soon gained possession of the village of Marcinelles very close to Charleroi.

By eleven o'clock that night the French advance was still continuing swiftly and they had gained control of all the area between their bridge heads over the Sambre and by midnight had taken Charleroi. Marshal Ney was given command of the 1st and 2nd Army Corps and sent to engage Wellington at Quatre Bras. The remainder of the Army under the control of the Emperor moved towards the Prussian Army under Prince Blücher. In a way the Allies had therefore achieved their first objective, the French Army was divided, its two sections were pursuing the Anglo-Allied Army and the Prussians separately and having to destroy them both before driving on to Brussels and the coast.

By dawn on the 16th Wellington was moving up to Quatre Bras to engage Ney. Later in the day despatches arrived for Ney from the Emperor ordering him to despatch Wellington with haste and then to manoeuvre his two Corps towards Ligny so that he could unite with

Fourth under Gérard and on the right Grouchy with the Light and Heavy Cavalry under Pajol and Excelmann. Labau's Corps was marching from Charleroi. The infantry of the Guard were kept back in reserve with the cuirassier regiments under Milhaud. The French strength was about 63,000 and the Prussians 83,500 but many of the latter were young, inexperienced troops with no previous field experience.

The Guard marched on to the field in one column and once in position were marched off to their battle stations. The Chasseurs to the Mill at Bry, the Young Guard at the rear of the Third Corps and the Grenadiers on the right of the Chasseurs.

The battle developed into a desperate bloody and savage contest with no quarter given by either side. In Ligny itself the combat was the fiercest, every house, street and yard filled with struggling fighting troops. The houses were ablaze and the air over the battlefield blanketed with a thick cloud of powder smoke. When weapons were lost the men fought with their hands and feet and the orders on both sides were – 'No prisoners'. Just before six o'clock strange masses of troops were observed approaching from the rear of Vandammes Corps and caused some panic among the French. They thought it was Wellington who, having beaten Ney, was coming to the aid of Blücher.

It was the approach of this column and Vandammes' retreat before Prussian counter attacks which compelled the Emperor to suspend sending in the Guard. He noted that Blücher had diverted all his available reserves on the right and that there were hardly any Prussian reserves left other than Borcke's Ninth Brigade. He was about to urge Milhaud's heavy cavalry and the Guard infantry forward when an ADC drew his attention to the mysterious troops in his rear. As a result he began to divert some of the Guard to reinforce Duhésme and Vandamme. The Young Guard and three regiments of the Middle Guard were sent to Duhésme and Vandamme respectively.

In fact the strange force was not Wellington's but D'Erlon with his 1st Corps who had been delayed en route from Gosselies. However, before the unlucky D'Erlon could reach the battlefield couriers arrived with despatches which directed him to join Ney at Quatre Bras. His force never did reach the battlefield of Ligny and the outcome of that contest was delayed as a result.

D'Erlon's column appearing on the fringes of the Battle had the effect of delaying the awaited launching of the attack on the Prussian centre by the infantry of the Guard and the massed cuirassier regiments. Meantime Blücher had misunderstood the diversion of the other Guard Regiments to aid Vandamme as a French retreat, and revitalised the weary Prussian soldiers into flinging themselves into one last attack. The young Prussians flung themselves against the French masses but before the movement could have any material effect Napoleon launched the Guard and the cuirassiers and mounted grenadiers at their centre. At the same time Gérard and Pécheux drove the last of the Prussians out of shattered Ligny* and up the slopes at the rear. In haste Blücher flung the remnants of his cavalry on the Guard columns but they advanced inexorably beating off every attack which was directed at them. General Lützow was taken



Marshal Michel Ney, Duke of Elchingen, Prince of Moskva, from the painting by Francois Gerard.

prisoner.

Eventually dusk drew the action to a close with the triumphant Guard in command of the field. Nevertheless because of the delay in delivering his 'coup de grace' Napoleon had lost the opportunity of destroying the Prussians and they were able to withdraw with order and unmolested. Blücher himself was unhorsed and injured but his Staff managed to get him away without the French observing the incident.

The Prussians moved off the field but not as Napoleon expected, towards Liège, but towards Wavre, leaving them in a good strategic position to keep in touch with Wellington's Army. Early in the morning of June 17, Napoleon inspected the battlefield and his hungry and dirty forces. By 11 a.m. they were formed up and were ready to march to engage Wellington. Because Ney had not come to his aid as expected and because of the delay in the delivery of the final attack by his reserve on the day before, the move towards Wellington was delayed and these small tactical setbacks may well have been the major contributing factors in causing the Emperor's downfall. The delays enabled the Prussians to slip away without complete destruction and to ultimately link back with Wellington on the fatal 18th.

All day on the 17th the Guard marched in the suffocating heat to seek Wellington. Napoleon, of course, had hoped that Ney would still be engaging Wellington at Quatre Bras but that action had been broken off and the

* A Prussian Officer who visited Ligny on July 16 wrote that "... Ligny is a village built of stone and thatched with straw. In the village are several farmhouses included in walls and gates. Every house the Prussians had converted into a fortress. Four times the French had been driven out. In the evening the French surrounded the village and set fire to it. A whole company of Westphalian infantry fell in the courtyard at the church, on the terrace before the church lay 50 dead ..."

*Napoleon and his staff officers
at the Battle of Waterloo.*



Duke was retreating towards fresh positions at Mont St Jean.

The French vedettes soon caught up with the British rearguard and a series of brisk skirmishing actions took place during the day. In the afternoon the weather became very humid, oppressive, the air very still. A heavy black cloud descended over the two great armies busily threading their way across the Belgian countryside towards Waterloo. Eventually the sky opened and torrential rain poured down on the exhausted troops. In a few minutes the almost tropical downpour had saturated the soft rich soil so much, that the cavalry, artillery and waggon trains were forced to keep to the pavé (paved road) to avoid sinking axle deep in the thick mud. As a consequence the infantry were forced off the road. Their trousers and breeches became coated in thick mud, many lost their shoes, and the troops began to get disgruntled and angry.

The French had not had a proper issue of rations since the previous day and Napoleon, anxious to keep contact with Wellington at all costs, was pressing them forward without respite. As a result some of the troops became progressively more ill-disciplined and began to break column in an effort to find food. They looted farmhouses and pillaged cottages for food often without success and by the time they had reached Le Caillou, and the scouts reported that Wellington had finally halted, the infantry at least were in a mutinous mood. Napoleon decided to make Le Caillou his Headquarters and the 1st Regiment of Foot Chasseurs were detailed to act as his body and quartermaster.

The remainder of the infantry of the Guard spent an unpleasant night, tired, filthy and hungry, seeking what relief they could from the cover of the trees, hedges and

waggon tilts. By the morning of the 18th the skies began to clear and the Guard lit fires to dry their wet and muddy clothing and to prepare thin soup from vegetables dug from the nearby fields. The men's humour had not much improved. It would require all the electric personality of the Emperor to re-awaken their fighting spirit.

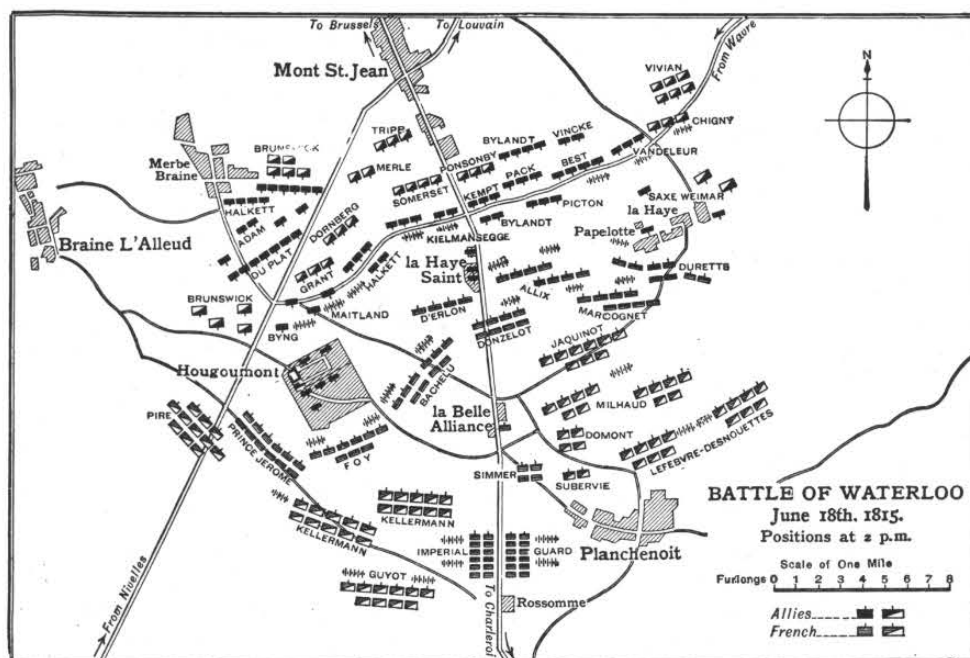
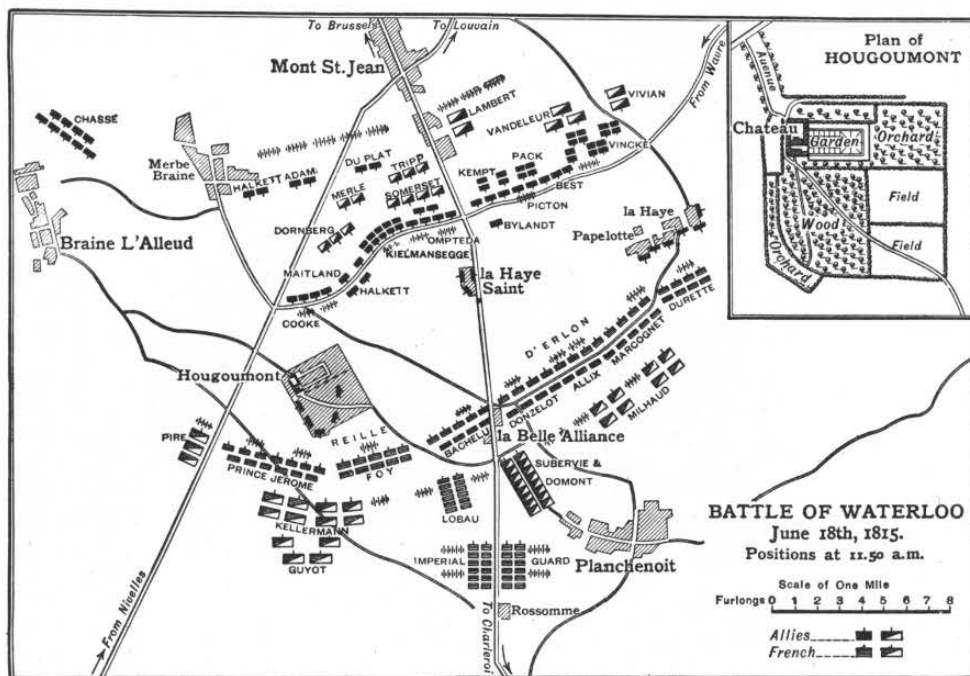
The Battle of Waterloo

The battlefield was the valley between Mont St Jean and the Farm known as La Belle Alliance. The valley itself consisted of a series of undulating rises separated by the main Brussels to Charleroi Road. East of the main road lay the valley of Simohain and on the other the valley stretched to Braine L'Alleud with a series of further undulations.

Seen from La Belle Alliance the land dipped and rose until it reached the crest of a ridge before Mont St Jean. Along the paved road itself the land did not rise too steeply but on either side it was very broken with several steep rises and small ravines, mounds and depressions.

The French line of battle was to be almost parallel to that of the Allies. The main highway passed through both positions. On the Allied side the road cut Wellington's position and on the French side the troops were similarly placed on either side of the road.

The Guard were roused from their damp bivouacs early in the morning and built fires to attempt to dry their saturated clothing. Many scavenged the surrounding fields to find vegetables or chickens to make thin soup. The majority of the Army had formed up before the Guard took up their place as the 'Grande Reserve'. The Emperor had decided that all his Army would be on the



field before the action started. He had expected that all the corps would be in position by nine o'clock but in the event the scattered troops took longer than he expected to reach the ground. Because there was only one main road giving onto the field it became clogged up with the artillery and waggon and ammunition trains and the infantry had difficulty in manoeuvring into position. By the time all the Army was in position the sky had cleared and the sun was shining.

Once they were in position Napoleon decided that he would pass before them in review before the action opened. As he passed along the lines the bands played, the batteries of drummers beat and the cavalry trumpets shrilled. The Emperor passed before the Army in full view of the Allied Army. As he passed in front of the

Guard the bands played 'Veillons au salut de l'Empire' – 'Let us watch over the safety of the Empire'. As he passed the eagle-bearers the Standards were lowered and troops put their headdress on their muskets and swords and cheered 'Vive L'Empereur'.

The Guard had been deployed in six lines, each line of four battalions. Each of the battalions was at a distance of about twenty paces from one another and were placed so that the main road split them.

The active part played by the Infantry of the Guard in this terrible battle commenced when Blücher's Prussians began to appear on Napoleon's right flank. The first appearance of the Prussians came as Bülow's Corps began to emerge from the wood of Paris. It was about half past four in the afternoon as the first two Prussian Brigades



Napoleon is cheered by members of the Old Guard before the Battle of Waterloo; at left are Grenadiers à Pied. This vivid impression of the scene is from a painting by Ernest Crofts.

began to make contact with the French right wing. Napoleon, after watching the situation carefully with his spyglass, decided to move over reinforcements.

The order was given to Count Lobau to take the Sixth Corps from its reserve position and to repel the intruders. As Lobau moved up, the Emperor ordered the Old and Middle Guard to move forward from its reserve position so as to keep in touch with the Sixth Corps. Lobau moved up to Plancenoit filing through the Chasseurs à Cheval under Domont who had been skirmishing with the Prussian advance troops. By this time the Prussian Fourth Army Corps under General Count Bülow von Dennewitz had entered the outskirts of the village of Plancenoit and their troops were filtering into the houses and enclosures and endeavouring to make them fortified positions.

Seeing that Lobau was going to have difficulty in keeping the advance of these powerful Prussian forces under control, Napoleon called up the Young Guard under Duhésme. Two divisions of the two regiments of Tirailleurs and Voltigeurs were brought up at the double and managed to support Lobau enough to get into the village. Eventually after fierce fighting they managed to clear most of the Prussians from the buildings and took the churchyard, a good natural defensive position with enclosing walls. From the churchyard position they managed to sustain a brisk fire on Bülow's men and forced them to retire from the village.

Reinforcements for the Prussians came up and they returned once again to the attack throwing fresh Landwehr and Line Infantry into the fray. The Young Guard were now suffering heavy casualties and Napoleon decided that the moment had arrived to throw in addi-

tional troops.

General Morand was ordered to take the 1st Battalion of the 2nd Foot Grenadier Regiment and the 1st Battalion of the 2nd Chasseurs to stiffen the resistance of the Young Guard. They went straight into the village and threw their combined force against the advancing Prussians. The fighting that ensued was some of the most savage of the campaign. After heavy fighting the Prussians were forced back again. This time the Prussians were taken right out of the village and up the sloping ground on the further side. However, further Prussian reinforcements were arriving all the time and Bülow advanced to the attack again. The hand-to-hand fighting in the village swayed backwards and forwards and Pelet had difficulty in restraining his men. Many of the wounded Prussians were murdered and no prisoners were being taken.

The 1st Battalion of the 1st Chasseurs known as the 'Sacred Battalion' (Bataillon Sacre) were still at Le Caillou in charge of the Emperor's HQ. Major Duuring had been given instructions to throw several platoons out to maintain a screen in contact with the right flank. Several platoons of the 1st Grenadiers were detailed for the same duty.

Napoleon was in a dilemma by this time. Although Lobau, Pelet and the Young Guard had checked Bülow for the moment it was becoming increasingly obvious that with many fresh Prussian troops continuing to arrive on the field he could not hold them off for much longer with such a weak force. On the other hand Wellington had not been beaten either by the French infantry or the repeated cavalry charges. There were still eight battalions of the Old Guard and six battalions of the Middle Guard still

not committed. According to Colonel Kennedy, who was an ADC to General Alten on the day, Napoleon should have committed this entire force in breaking Wellington's line much earlier. As it was, the early arrival of the Prussians had re-vitalised the Allies on the opposite ridge and the Guard had been weakened by the detaching of two battalions on the right.

At this moment an ADC brought a despatch to inform Napoleon that Bülow was renewing the frenzied Prussian attacks at Plancenoit and that Lobau and the Guard were beginning to give way under the enormous pressure. The moment of truth had arrived and Napoleon had to throw in the Imperial Guard to force a decision. Eleven of the Guard battalions were formed into columns and marched up. At this time the 1st Battalion of the 2nd Grenadiers, and the 1st Battalion of the 2nd Chasseurs, were by Plancenoit, the 1st Battalion of the 1st Chasseurs was at Le Caillou and the two élite battalions of the 1st Grenadiers were still in reserve back at Ronsomme.

Meantime Wellington was marshalling his weary troops, getting some to lay down and dressing up the remaining squares. Reserves of Hanoverian Landwehr and young Brunswick infantry were moved up.

In an effort to duplicate his victory at Ligny Napoleon was about to stake all on a mighty thrust at Wellington's

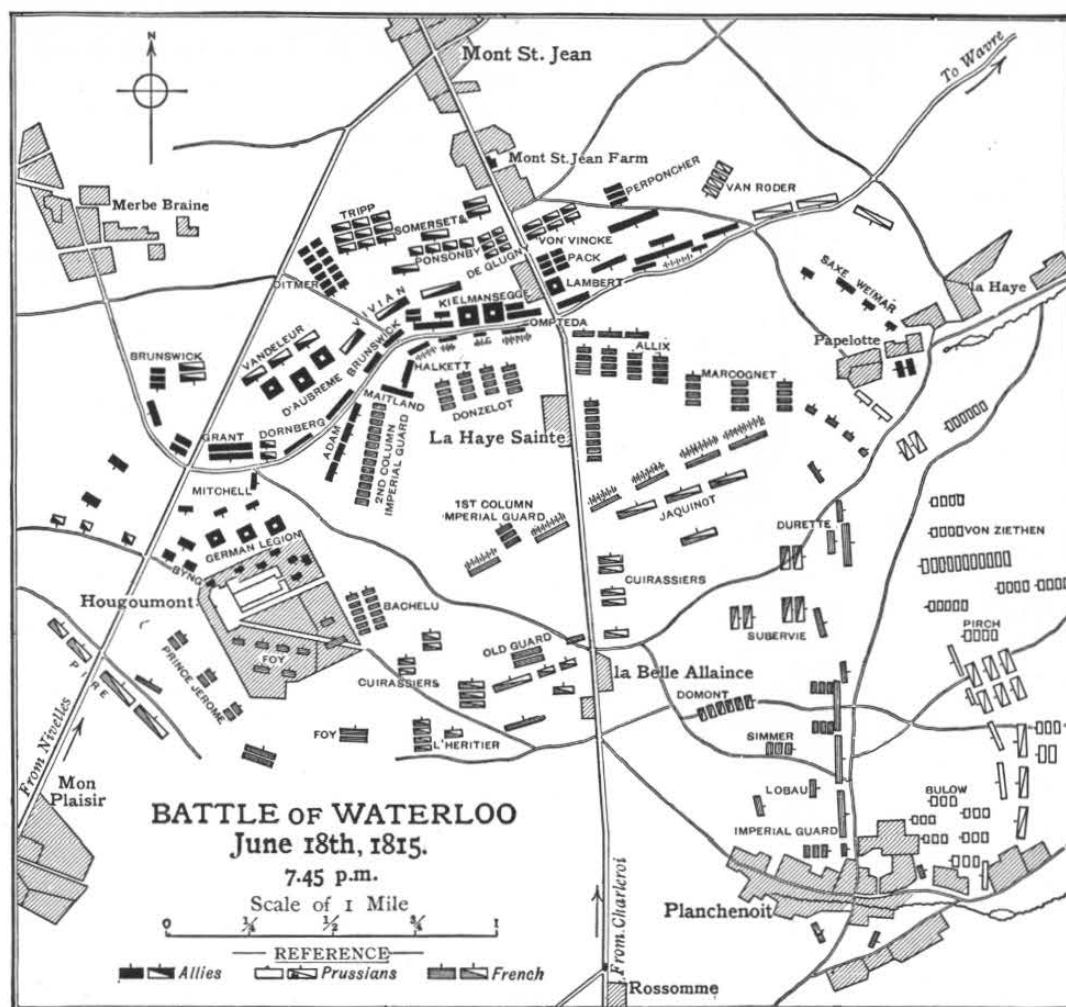
line with the Old and Middle Guard. Drouot was ordered to bring the Guard forward. Six of the battalions were free to move. One, the 2nd Battalion of the 3rd Regiment of Grenadiers under Belcourt were ordered to a station on a rise near the Farm of La Haye Sante. Three further battalions, the 2nd Battalion of the 1st Chasseurs, the 2nd Battalion of the 2nd Chasseurs, and the 2nd Battalion of the 2nd Grenadiers, were brought forward and formed into defensive squares at the bottom of the slope near La Haye Sante. The remainder were to form the first wave of attack and comprised:

- (i) The 1st Battalion of the 3rd Regiment of Grenadiers.
- (ii) The 1st and 2nd Battalions of the 4th Regiment of Grenadiers (but with the strength of one battalion only).
- (iii) The 1st Battalion of the 3rd Chasseurs.
- (iv) The 2nd Battalion of the 3rd Chasseurs.
- (v) The 1st and 2nd Battalions of the 4th Chasseurs (but only one battalion strong).

There were therefore five battalions ready to march. The masses of infantry were moved down into one of the folds in the undulating ground adjoining the south eastern angle of the enclosure of the Chateau of Hougomont and were formed into square columns (the French say

Napoleon's last inspection of the army, June 18, 1815. Grenadiers à Pied are in the centre background, cheering with bearskins raised on their muskets. In the foreground are line artillery. This is from a painting by J. P. Beadle.





'squares' the British historians 'columns'). The square columns were in echelon, the right echelon in front. Almost as if aware that the climax to this terrible battle had arrived there was a momentary pause in the otherwise ceaseless artillery bombardment.

Orders were shouted and the great force of slowly moving infantry began to move up the slope. As they marched they were encumbered by the difficult folds in the ground, the beaten corn stalk and the thousands of dead and wounded men and animals all over the ground. Because of this the mass became rather disorganised and the two battalions of the 3rd Chasseurs at least became so closed up as to become virtually one huge mass of men. In any event very little space showed between the corps and in front Marshal Ney rode on horseback accompanied by Generals Friant and Poret. Behind them Major Guillemin lead the leading mass, the 1st Battalion of the 3rd Grenadiers.

There always has been some controversy over the precise formation which the Guard used during the attack. According to some French historians the attack was made in a 'single column' and Siborn calls it 'two columns'. It seems that both could be wrong. Most of the information is derived from eye witness accounts but the British were on rising ground looking down on the masses of infantry moving up towards them under the cover of thick black powder smoke. The masses of infantry were moving slightly diagonally across their front and the foreshortening effect must have made them appear to be

two solid blocks of men.

As they started up the slope the batteries of drums beat the 'Pas de Charge' the Eagles were held aloft and the officers waved their hats and exhorted the men forward with shouts of 'En Avant' and 'Vive L'Empereur'. The Guard marched as if on parade with their arms at the present, and using their slow parade pace. As they marched the British Artillery found the range and tore great gaps in the flanks of the masses of men, who promptly closed up the gaps. It was noted that the officers were all keen to lead their men from the front, presenting themselves first to the enemy. Ney quickly lost his horse and then his plumed cocked hat and then marched the rest of the way on foot with his gold embroidered uniform all splattered with mud and torn.

In the lead were the 1st Battalion of the 3rd Grenadiers. They struck at the British 30th Regiment and the 2nd Battalion of the 79th Foot on the left of Halkett's Brigade who were still reeling under the terrific bombardment from some Guard Artillery that had moved up in support of the Chasseurs and Grenadiers. The British began to give way under the pressure from the head of the French column, but General Friant fell, wounded in the hand and the Grenadiers wavered and almost halted. Poret de Morvan took over command and waving his sword encouraged the men forward. As he did so General Baron Chassé brought forward the Fifth Brigade of Dutch-Belgians and gallantly charged down the hill with the bayonet driving back the French and encouraging the



The Port Aigle of the Chasseurs à Pied of the Guard, with standard bearer in full dress.

British to follow them.

Meantime, the second French square column, which comprised the 1st Battalion of the 4th Grenadiers, had reached the right of Sir Colin Halkett's British Brigade including the 33rd Foot and the 2nd Battalion of the 69th Foot. The already much weakened British could not withstand the impetus of the French advance and began to give way until Sir Colin grabbed at a falling Colour and waved it, shouting at his men and encouraging them. As he did so he fell wounded which in itself prompted the British infantry to fight back desperately and stop the French advance.

The third huge mass comprising the closed up two battalions of the 3rd Chasseurs had almost reached the crest without opposition and must have imagined that they were going to be totally unopposed. Drums beating and still marching with their slow tread they reached the crest of the ridge when Maitland's Foot Guards stood up in four ranks in their front. For some moments they appeared shocked, nonplussed and unable to move, then the British order came to fire by volleys and the front ranks were swathed down. The British were firing fast, passing muskets from the back to the front and the almost continual hail of ball mowed the French down as they stood. General Michel fell dying and the Guard still halted. They could not advance now because of the piles of dead and wounded in their front. The British Artillery was still pounding great holes in their flank. No troops could stand this terrible pressure for very long and eventually the shattered Chasseurs broke and rushed pell-mell down the hill. The British followed and hand-to-hand fighting took place in such a confused *melée* that the artillery had to stop for fear of killing their own men.

The 4th Chasseurs, the last of the square columns to move up came to assist their comrades-in-arms but Maitland managed to pull his men off and to get them to retreat, with some loss but generally in good order to their old position. Naturally the Guard infantry attempted to follow, albeit also in rather a confused state, and as the Guards gained the ridge and turned right about and commenced firing into the advancing French mass the British batteries began to fire long raking shots into the centre of the column with case and chain shot. As the great blocks of French forced their way up to the Ohain Road, Major General Adam's Brigade of the Second British Infantry Division was brought round into their flank by Sir John Colborne of the 52nd Foot. The British, including the 71st Highland Light Infantry and the 95th Rifles began to pour volley after volley into the flank of the great column. As they did Halkett and Maitland, and the Dutch-Belgians under Chassé, also opened up. General Mallet fell seriously wounded. Sir John Colborne moved the 52nd forward with the bayonet and the Imperial Guard, slowly at first, and then faster began to withdraw. The great gamble had failed and the flower of the French Army was on the retreat. Meantime Wellington had realised that his opportunity was at hand, and ordered the general advance of his whole line and the French infantry in the other parts of the field also began to retreat.

It was now about half past eight. In Plancenoit the two battalions of Pelet were attempting to hold on with the remnants of the Young Guard. The Prussian 11th Pommeranian Corps were spilling into the village and the buildings were blazing in the moonlight. Eventually even the Guard could stand the horror of the slaughter no longer and they retreated from Plancenoit still fighting the



The Port Aigle (standard) of the Grenadiers à Pied of the Imperial Guard.

Prussians in small isolated bands. The disintegration of the Guard had started. The two battalions of the 3rd Chasseurs had tried to stem the advancing tide of British and Hanoverians but had melted away. The remaining battalion of the 4th Chasseurs was annihilated around Hougoumont. The 2nd Battalion of the 2nd Chasseurs retreated in good order, keeping its dressing and moving slowly over the corpse strewn ground but was eventually decimated and with only a skeleton of its former strength was gradually whittled away to nothing. The 2nd Battalion of the 1st Chasseurs retreated in good order until it got to a point near La Belle Alliance where with Cambroune shouting his famous rude word in its centre it was shot to shreds. The 1st Battalion of the 3rd Grenadiers was almost completely destroyed by a continuing murderous hail of shot from the British artillery. At this stage only the 2nd Battalion of the 3rd Grenadiers under Belcourt was holding fast. It retreated, but slowly, until the sides of the square were reduced to a thin line of exhausted figures. Eventually it broke and dispersed into small bands who retreated back to Ronsomme.

The two battalions of the 'Iron Men' the 1st Regiment of the Grenadiers remained intact. Inside their squares the last of the great Imperial Staff had found shelter. Around them the army retreated. Many of their old comrades approached the squares and beseeched them to open so that they could find security within from the slashing sabres of the Prussian Dragoons and British Hussars but they would not give way, the squares would open for no man. The Young Guard had broken and had fled the field, Plancenoit was in flames and the last two squares of the Old Guard were moved off the field, still keeping their formation until they reached Le Caillou where the Emperor, who had remained within the square of the 1st Battalion, left them and entered the square of the 1st Battalion of the 1st Chasseurs, 'The Sacred Battalion', who together with the tiny elements of Sappers and Marins remained his personal guard until he left his last battlefield.

ruins, or rather of rubbish, scattered with the broken fragments of household furniture. The environs, generally covered with rich crops appeared destroyed by some dreadful hail-storm. Every place occupied by our bivouacs were scarred by the black scabrous places marking the position of our watch-fires'.

A British Artillery Officer comments on the effect of the cannon fire on the Guard columns

'... the veteran warriors so long esteemed the first troops in Europe, advanced across the plain with a firmness which nothing could exceed; and though our grape and canister made a dreadful havoc in their ranks they were never disconcerted... the French displayed the greatest rage and fury, they cursed the British while they were fighting and cursed the precision with which the English grape-shot was fired...'

Extract from a letter from John Lewis, a private of the 95th Rifles, to friends at Axminster

July 8th 1815

'... as I just said we now extended in front. Boney's Imperial Guard made a charge at us; we saw them coming and we all closed in and formed a square just as they came within a few yards of us and they fired at us, and at that moment the man on my right hand was shot through the body and the blood run out at his belly and back like a pig stuck in the throat; he dropt on his side; I spoke to him; he just said "Lewis I'm done". All this time we kept up a constant fire on the Imperial Guard as they retreated

Some Anecdotes of the Battle

A Prussian Account

A Prussian officer recorded after the battle that Bülow was guided to Plancenoit by a peasant. This man had taken the Prussians by way of a valley lower down than the wood of Fritschermont and penetrated the village in the rear of the French reserves. They appeared on the French flank so quickly and at such an acute angle that they were well into the village before Napoleon's staff saw them. His attention was drawn to the Prussian troops and his face assumed a chalky whiteness and he said, 'They 'ave the Prussian colours'.

A French Officer's comment on the behaviour of the French troops

'No sooner had our troops taken a momentary position near some village than they spread like a torrent through the unfortunate habitations; liquor, provisions, movables, linen, clothing, everything disappeared in an instant. Each village where we encamped was left next day a heap of



Typical shako plates worn by Young Guard regiments.

but they often came about and fired. We lost both our Colonels, major and two eldest captains and had only a young captain to take command of us. Seeing we lost so many men and all our commanding officers, my heart began to fail, and Boney's Guards made another attack on us but we made them retreat as before . . .'

The Death of General Dunesme

In Genappe there was a complete 'pele-mele', the retreating enemy were being cut down like sheep; In Genappe where 800 lay on the spot, fell General Dunesme, the commander of the rear guard, by the hands of a Brunswicker who said - 'The Duke fell yesterday and you shall also bite the dust'. He was severely wounded and was taken to a small village. The Prussians in their advance, finding a French General there, entered the room and sabred him.

The square of the 1st Regiment of Grenadiers

The Emperor, seeing the rout of the French army, and the impossibility of resisting the continually increasing forces of the enemy, arrived at eight o'clock in the evening, attended by a single officer, at the square formed by the 1st Regiment of the Foot Grenadiers of the Imperial Guard. It was the last regiment which still kept a good countenance, and the Emperor hoped by its means to preserve and establish an order of retreat.

'Grenadiers', he said, 'we are going to re-write the army'. It was near nine o'clock - the Emperor was constantly in the square. The regiment was always surrounded by the light cavalry, who dared not approach too close on arriving at a large rivulet; the regiment was obliged to derange the order of its square in order to surmount this obstacle. The night, and a charge of cavalry made at that moment, at last threw the regiment into disorder; and in spite of the most vigorous resistance, and the conduct and courage of the Emperor, the regiment was separated and obliged to retreat in disorder. The Emperor remained with this gallant band of men until he reached Le Caillon.

At the moment when the rest of the French army commenced, two Grenadiers seeing the great park of the artillery abandoned, with tears in their eyes quitted the ranks and bade adieu to their comrades, crying 'We could not die in Egypt, or at Marengo, we must perish here'. They threw themselves across the barrels of the cannon and were sabred by the enemy.

Extract of a letter from an Officer of the Commissariat

' . . . we picked up several wounded. I cannot omit a circumstance that occurred yesterday: while on the field among the wounded, we discovered a French grenadier, most dreadfully cut down the face and with one of his legs broken by a musket-ball; common humanity induced me to offer him assistance; he eagerly requested some drink; having a flask of weak gin-and-water I had taken purposely for the wounded, I gave it to him and could not help remarking how many thousands had suffered for the ambition of one man. He returned my flask and looking with a savage pride on the dead bodies that lay in heaps around him, he cried, as strong as his weakness could allow him - 'Vive Napoleon! La gloire de la France'.



On the march in a hard campaign the men were far removed from the smart, elegant, turn-out portrayed in most uniform plates. This member of the Young Guard carries his locally acquired water bottle and a recently acquired loaf. Note the cloth shako cover.

Extract from the account given by General Count Drouot, Aide-Major-General of the Imperial Guard on June 18, 1815 before the Chamber of Peers June 24, 1815

'At Ligny his majesty ordered that eight battalions of chasseurs of the old Guard, and a great part of the reserves of the artillery, should proceed to the left of the village of St Amand to the assistance of the first two corps. But it was soon found that this reinforcement was not necessary,

and it was called back towards the village of Ligny, by which the army was to debauch. The Grenadiers of the Guard transversed the villages, overthrew the enemy; and the army, singing the hymn of victory, took up a position beyond the ravine, on the field which it had first illustrated by the most brilliant exploits . . . at Waterloo the battalions of the Guard were received by the most terrible fire of musketry and grape . . .

The French official account of the Battle of Ligny includes the following detail on the final charge of the Guard

' . . . eight battalions of the Guard debauched with fixed bayonets and behind them four squadrons of the Guards, the Cuirassiers of General Deloit, those of General Milland and the Horse Grenadiers of the Guard. The Old Guard attacked with the bayonet the enemy's columns,

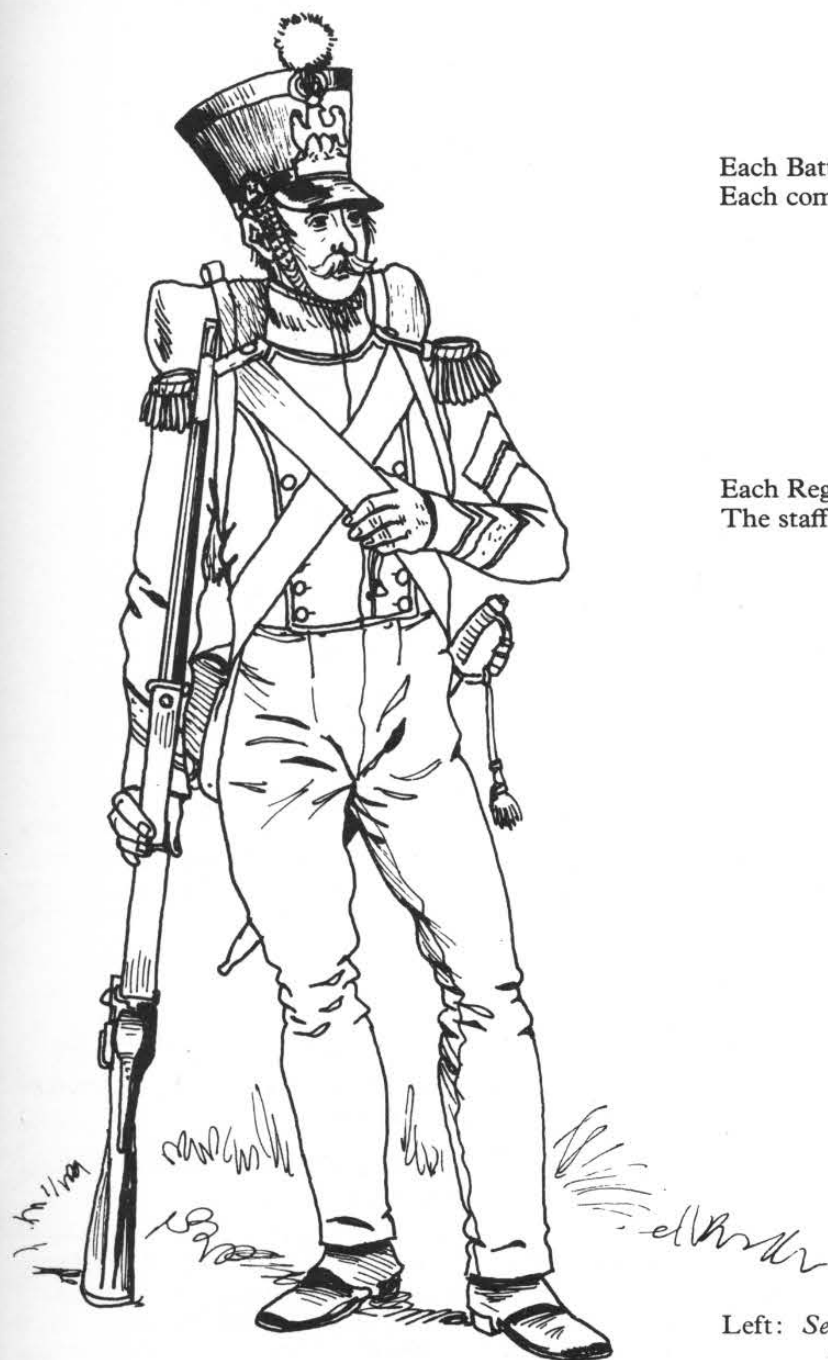
which were on the heights of Bussy, and in an instant covered the field of battle with dead . . . the flower of the Prussian army was destroyed in this battle. Its loss could not be less than 15,000 men. Ours was 3,000 killed and wounded.'

Establishment of a Regiment of Infantry of the Imperial Guard

Mounted Officers: Colonel
Colonel en seconde
Adjudant General
Major
Chefs de Bataillons
Quatier Maitres
Adjudants Majors
Sous Adjudants Majors
Lieutenant en 1^{er}
Lieutenant en 2^{er}

Each Battalion comprises 6 companies:
Each company: 1 Capitaine
1 Lieutenant en premier
1 Lieutenant en second
1 Sergent major
1 Fourrier
4 Sergents
6 Caporaux
102 Grenadiers
2 Tambours
2 Sapeurs

Each Regiment had 4 battalions.
The staff of a regiment comprised:
1 Colonel
1 Major
4 Chefs de bataillons
1 Quartier maitre tresorier
4 adjudants majors
2 sous adjudants major
4 porte drapeaux
4 officiers de sante
1 eleve chirurgien
1 vaguesestre major
1 tambour major
4 caporaux tambours
1 chef de musique
46 musiciens
1 maitre tailleur
1 maitre cordonnier
2 armuriers
1 guetrier



Left: Sergeant of Tirailleurs of the Young Guard in campaign dress, but without shako cover.

Analysis of Siborne's figures

Regiment	Number of Battalions	Strength
1st and 2nd Foot Grenadiers	4	2,294
3rd and 4th Foot Grenadiers	3	1,623
	7	3,917
1st and 2nd Foot Chasseurs	4	2,402
3rd and 4th Foot Chasseurs	4	2,069
	8	4,471
1st and 3rd Tirailleurs	4	2,043
1st and 3rd Voltigeurs	4	2,123
	8	4,166
Old Guard	8	4,696
Middle Guard	7	3,692
Young Guard	8	4,166
Grenadiers a pied*	7	3,917
Chasseurs a pied	8	4,471
	15	8,388

French sources give the following:

4 regiments of Grenadiers (7 battalions) 3,800
4 regiments of Chasseurs (8 battalions) 4,600

Seniority of the Old and Middle Guard

1st Grenadiers
raised December 2, 1799.
2nd Grenadiers
raised April 15, 1806.
3rd Grenadiers
raised April 8, 1815.
4th Grenadiers
raised May 9, 1815.
1st Chasseurs
raised December 2, 1799.
2nd Chasseurs
raised April 15, 1806.
3rd Chasseurs
raised April 8, 1815
4th Chasseurs
raised May 9, 1815.

Letter written by Lt Hon George Cathcary, 6th Dragoon Guards, ADC to the Duke of Wellington to Siborne

'... I certainly saw the black looking columns assembled and advancing to attack and should say that their appearance was more considerable as they loomed through smoke and fog than represented in the sketch you sent me. I was dismounted by a cannon shot from some of the batteries which, were, I suppose meant to cover this attack and therefore had not a good opportunity of minutely observing their formation or numbers.

'It is, of course, the interest of the deflated party to make their numbers appear to have been as small and inadequate as possible. I think you could not be wrong in adopting Colonel Batty's numbers; he makes two columns, together consisting of 12 battalions. Gourgourd who, whether by dictation of Napoleon or not, is certain to have written the approved version of Longwood on a subject much discussed, also admits that there were two columns



Right: Officer of Tirailleurs of the Young Guard, in typical campaign dress.



A Voltigeur of the Young Guard in campaign dress, marching order. Note oilskin shako cover.

together amounting to 12 battalions and the story of 8 being called off and kept in reserve and only four engaged in "beau a dire" and excusable enough for a beaten party ...'

Sir John Colborne KCB of the 52nd Regiment wrote:

'As we were ascending a hill a French Colonel of Cuirassiers galloped out of the French ranks holloaring out "Vive le Roi" – repeatedly, and rode up to me

addressed and said "Napoleon est avec les Gardes – voila l'attaque qui se fait". This officer remained with me for some time. My anxious attention had been attracted to the dense columns moving on the Genappe road towards the centre of our position and observing their rapid advance I ordered our left hand company to wheel to the left and formed the remaining companies on that company – this movement placed us nearly parallel with the moving columns of the French Imperial Guard. I ordered a strong company to extend to our front and at this moment Sir F. Adam rode up, and asked me what I was going to do. I said "to make that column feel our fire" ... if our line had been produced it would have formed an obtuse angle with the Brigade of Guards.

'I observed that as soon as the French columns were sharply attacked by our skirmishes, a considerable part of the column halted and formed a line facing towards the 52nd and opened a sharp fire on the Battalion.'

Lt G. Gawler, 52nd Regiment

'I cannot describe positively from my own observations the formation of the enemy, for, when the right of the 52nd Regt subsequently crossed the summit, the smoke was very dense, but it has been confidently stated in the regiment that, as seen from this side it was in two columns, in direct echelons the left considerably in the rear ...'

Corporal Aldridge of the 2nd 95th Battalion Rifles writing to Col Gawler

'... the French came up in three columns abreast of each other; they looked like quarter distance columns. Their left was obliquely to my left. They rushed forward three times and came very close to the Artillery – Captain Logan gave the word "Forward" to the Battalions. The enemy gave way – one Artilleryman who was lying under the guns jumped up with a match and let off two or three that were loaded. His comrades afterwards used to call him "Lord Waterloo".'

Major Dawson Kelly, 73rd Regt

'It is within my memory that the fog and smoke lay so heavy upon the ground that we could only ascertain the approach of the enemy by the noise and the clashing of arms which the French usually make in their advance to attack and it has often occurred to me from the above circumstances (the heavy fog) that the accuracy and the particulars with which the crisis has been so frequently and so minutely discussed must have a good deal of fancy in the narrative. I can only therefore say that when the last attacking column emerged from the smoke in our front the French Officers were in the front cheering their men ... we could see little of what was going on in our front.'

Letter from Lt and Capt H. Weyland Powell, 1st Foot Guards, to Siborne

'... as the smoke cleared away a superb sight opened on us. A close column of Grenadiers (about 70 in front) of la Mayene Garde, about 6,000 strong, led, as we heard since by Marshal Ney, were seen ascending "au pas de charge" shouting "Vive l'Empereur". They continued to advance till within fifty or sixty paces of our front when

the Brigade was ordered to stand up – “La Garde” suddenly stopped. In less than a minute above 300 were down. They now wavered and several of the rear divisions began to draw out as if to deploy, whilst some of the men in their rear beginning to fire over the heads of those in front was evident of their confusion. “La Garde” turned and gave us little opportunity of trying the steel. We charged down the hill till we passed the end of the orchard of Hougomont when our right flank became exposed to another heavy column who were advancing in support of the former column. This circumstance besides that our charge was isolated obliged the Brigade to retire forwards our original position.

‘Opportunately, Sir F. Adams’ Light Brigade had in the meantime come round the knoll between the position and Hougomont, when we had been ordered to take ground to our left and were advancing under the hedge and blind line along the northern side of the orchard of Hougomont. As soon therefore as we had uncovered their front we halted and fronted. The two Brigades now returned to the charge which the chasseurs did not wait for and we continued our forward movement until we got to the bottom of the valley between the positions. There our Brigade halted to restore its order by calling out the covering Sergeants and forming companies.’

Lt and Capt H. Davis, 1st Foot Guards

‘... when the French Imperial Guard advanced to the second attack, the same manoeuvre was repeated by the British Guards whose attack was made in column, were broken and driven back with great slaughter, the field being literally covered with their dead.’

Ensign J. P. Diron, 1st Foot Guards

‘With regard to our formation, that of the Imperial Guard and what took place, I feel as certain as if it had only occurred yesterday. The Brigade had been formed in line four deep and ordered to lie down. When the Imperial Guard came in sight, the men were desired to stand up and cautioned at the same time not to fire without orders. The Imperial Guard advanced in close column with parted arms, the officers of the leading divisions in front waving their swords. The French columns showed no appearance of having suffered on their advance, but seemed as regularly formed as if on a field day.’

Composition and organisation of the Infantry of the Guard from a document prepared by Messieurs Jacques Brouillet and Rene-Charles and Olivier Planke for this work

The author thanks these friends for so kindly researching this material which has all come from contemporary and modern authoritative French documentation. In some respects it differs from the information available at the British Museum and from the British historian Siborne, and although there is some repetition it is considered a valuable complement to this work.

La Garde Imperiale (troops on foot) in 1815

Genie

Lieutenant-générale Haxo, 125 men:

1 company of pioneers with a small element of miners (mineurs) who were under the orders of Lt Col Borrel-Vivier. All the officers were mounted.

Marins

Capitaine de Frégate Tailhade, 147 men.

The decree of April 8, 1815, re-organising the Guard

Infantry – Corps of Grenadiers.

3 regiments of Grenadiers (Old Guard).

6 regiments of Tirailleurs (Young Guard).

Infantry – Corps of Chasseurs.

3 regiments of Chasseurs (Old Guard).

6 regiments of Voltigeurs (Young Guard).

Composition : Each regiment of infantry had two battalions, each battalion of 4 companies with a strength of 150 men (this total included officers and NCOs).

In time of war the companies were to have a strength of 200 men.

The company was in that case augmented by 1 extra sous-lieutenant, 2 sergeants, 4 caporaux and 43 soldats.

The corps of Grenadiers and Chasseurs were to have a Staff each.

The force of each corps of infantry was to total, for each corps:

111 officers (superior rank).

214 officers (subaltern rank).

3,680 NCOs and men of the Old Guard.

7,329 NCOs and men of the Young Guard.

Total: 11,334

*Gorgetts of Guard Infantry
regiments. Grenadiers, chas-
seurs, voltigeurs, and sailors
are shown in order from the
top.*





Top Left: *Genie* (engineers) were issued with this entrenching armour. Top Right: Engineers' helmet. Above: Views of the sailors' shako, showing plate detail, detachable peak, and plume; and the oilskin cover worn on campaign.

In theory the composition of the Grenadiers à Pied of the Old Guard was:

- 1 général de division colonel commandant.
- 1 général de division colonel en seconde.
- 3 généraux de brigade adjudants-généraux.
- 1 capitaine quartier-maitre des grenadiers.
- 1 capitaine quartier-maitre des tirailleurs.
- 1 capitaine d'habillement des grenadiers.
- 1 capitaine d'habillement des tirailleurs.

Staff of a Regiment.

- 1 général de brigade major commandant.
- 2 chefs de bataillon (with the rank of Lt Col).
- 2 capitaines adjudants-majors.
- 2 lieutenants en premier sous-adjudants-majors.
- 1 lieutenant en premier officier payeur.
- 1 lieutenant en premier porte aigle.
- 1 chirurgien-major.
- 1 aide-major.

Officers of each company

- 1 capitaine.
- 1 lieutenant en premier.
- 2 lieutenant en seconde.

So for each regiment there were:

8 capitaines, 8 lieutenants en premier and 16 lieutenants en seconde.

Eagles

The Young Guard had no Eagles.

1 Eagle for the Grenadiers.

1 Eagle for the Chasseurs.

(the latter was under the protection of the 9th and 10th Companies of the 2nd Battalion of the 1st Chasseurs.)

Cantinieres

For the Old Guard – Grenadiers and Chasseurs – the names of two cantinieres are known; Catherine Rohmer and 'Marie-Tête-de-Bois'. They were both killed in the last squares after serving on 17 campaigns.

Drum Majors

There were two drum majors in 1801, three in 1804 and six when the 2nd Regiment was formed. One of these was detached to the third Regiment upon its formation.

Musicians

The decree of April 8, gives the same uniform for the two Corps of the Old Guard. There was one uniform for the musicians of all the regiments of the Young Guard.

There was only one band for the 1st and 2nd Regiments of the Grenadiers and one for the 1st and 2nd Chasseurs. The music of the Grenadiers was present at the Battle of Waterloo. It is possible that there was no time to properly organise a band for the Young Guard.

A decree of April 23, 1813 is given by Commandant Bucquoy.

'... There were twelve bands of music in the Guard, one for each brigade. There were four for the Tirailleurs; for the 1st, 4th, 7th and 10th regiments, there was one band for a brigade of three regiments (sic) ...'

A painting by Jean Augé showing the last square of the 3rd Chasseurs at Waterloo shows the drummers in the centre but no band.

The theoretical composition of a band of the Grenadiers (after Marcel Baldet) order of defile:

Tambour Major

3 Tambour-maitres – 24 tambours (theoretically – 16).
(2 tambours par compagnie).

1 musicien-maitre.

1 grosse caisse.

2 caisses clair.

2 pavillon chinois.

1 triangle.

2 cymbaliers (nègre).

16 clarinettes en ut.

1 petite clarinette en fa.

1 petite flute.

4 cors.

2 trompettes.

4 bassons.

3 tambours.

2 serpents.

1 buccin (trombone a gueule de serpent).

Strength of the Infantry of the Guard in April 1815

Grenadiers	3 regiments	3,000
Chasseurs	3 regiments	3,000
Tirailleurs	6 regiments	7,200
Voltigeurs	6 regiments	7,200
		20,400
Genie		250
Marins		150
		20,800

Average height of the men

Grenadiers: 5 ft 5 inches.

Chasseurs: 5 ft 3 inches.

Qualification for entry

- Admission to the Old Guard:
12 years' service on campaign.
- Admission to the Young Guard:
4 years' service on campaign.

Pattern of completion of establishments :

- 1st Regt Grenadiers and Chasseurs from men of the 2nd Regt.
- 2nd Regt Grenadiers and Chasseurs from men of the 3rd Regt.
- 3rd Regt from Tirailleurs and Voltigeurs of the Young Guard and selected troops from line regiments.
- Admission to the Young Guard was by selection from the best of the conscripts and volunteers.

A note from the newspaper *Le Moniteur* on June 1, 1815 states:

'... the Old Guard is augmented by 3 battalions. Twelve others, formed of veterans of other campaigns have been directed to the Young Guard. ...'

'... The Imperial Guard is receiving reinforcements and without doubt now has a strength of 40,000 men. ...'

The Young Guard Composition of a Regiment of Infantry

Etat Major (Staff)

- 1 Major Commandant.
- 2 Chefs de Bataillon.
- 1 Capitaine adjudant-major.
- 2 lieutenants adjudant-major.
- 1 or 2 sous lieutenant sous-adjutant-majors.
- 1 sous lieutenant officier payeur.
- 1 chirurgien-major.
- 1 aide-major.

Petit Etat-Major (Junior Staff)

- 1 Vaquemesstre.
- 2 adjudants-sous-officiers.
- 2 Caporaux tambours.
- 1 Chef de Musique.
- 2 Chefs armurier.
- 3 maitre-ouvriers.

There were two battalions of four companies with the following strengths:

Each Company:

- 1 Capitaine
- 2 lieutenants
- 2 sous-lieutenants
- 1 sergeant major
- 4 sergents
- 1 fourrier
- 8 caporaux
- 2 sapeurs
- 2 tambours
- 102 hommes.

According to Commandant Bucquoy there were no adjudants-sous-officiers in the Old Guard, their functions being carried out by the lieutenant-sous-adjutants-major.

Order of Battle

Garde Imperiale (Infanterie) le 18 Juin 1815

Lt Général Comte Druout Aide-Major-General.
Old Guard

- (a) Grenadiers: Lt Général Friant
Lt Général Roguet, colonel
en second.

- 1st Grenadiers: Maréchal de camp
Petit. 1,500
- 2nd Grenadiers: Maréchal de camp
Christiani. 1,000 or 1,100
- 3rd Grenadiers: Maréchal de camp
Poret de Morvan.
- 4th Grenadiers: Maréchal de camp
Harlet (1 battalion).

Total 7 batts: 3,800 or
4,250 men.

- (b) Chasseurs: Lt Général Morand
Lt Général Michel, colonel
en second.

- 1st Chasseurs: Maréchal de camp
Cambronne. 1,306
- 2nd Chasseurs: Maréchal de camp
Pelet. 1,239
- 3rd Chasseurs: Maréchal de camp
Herion (1 battalion). 1,128

Total 7 batts: 4,600 or
4,713 men.

The 3rd and 4th Grenadiers and the 3rd and 4th Chasseurs were known as the 'Jeune Garde' (*Middle Guard*). Some authorities give the 4th Chasseurs two battalions.

Young Guard

The majority were volunteers enrolled from young men of Paris and Lyons. The Young Guard were commanded by Lt Général Comte Duhésme who was the commander of both the 1st and 2nd Divisions of the Young Guard.

The 2nd Division was in the Vendée.

1st Division:

Lt Général Baron Barrois.

Chief of Staff Adjudant-commandant Mellinet.

1st Brigade:

- Maréchal de camp Chartrand.
- 1st Tirailleurs Col Trappier de Malcolm.
- 1st Voltigeurs probably Col Secretan.

2nd Brigade:

Maréchal de camp Guye.

Total 4 batts.

3rd Tirailleurs:

Colonel Pailhes.

3rd Voltigeurs:

Baron Hurel.

Total 4 batts.

Total 8 battalions = 4,200 men.

Mounted Officers

The colonel, colonel en seconde, chefs de bataillon. On foot the capitaines, lieutenants and sous-lieutenants.

Pioneers

Two regiments of two battalions each of four companies: Sixteen 'sapeurs' to each regiment. The sergeant and the corporal formed part of the junior staff of the regiment.

In the morning the infantry of the Guard manoeuvred in columns deploying in the following order:

Young Guard

Chasseurs – the left at the head in the order 4, 3, 2, 1.

Grenadiers – the left at the head in the order 4, 3, 2, 1.

During the action the Guard manoeuvred in 'squares by battalion' according to the diary of Capitaine Coignet.

In a letter dated May 18, 1835, General Petit said . . . 'after the 16th June 1815 the 4th Chasseurs and the 4th Grenadiers were reduced to the strength of one battalion . . .'

The 3rd and 4th Chasseurs lost 1,141 men in the June 16–18 period. All the officers of the 4th Grenadiers, the 3rd Chasseurs and the 4th Chasseurs were either killed or wounded.

General Friant was wounded, Poret de Morvan was wounded, Harlet was wounded, Michel was killed, Cambronne was wounded, Mallet was killed, Duhésme was wounded and later sabred by the Prussian Hussars, Chartrand was executed after Waterloo.

According to Houssaye the following were the commanders of the battalions at 7–9 o'clock on the evening of the battle:

Friant and Poret de Morvan (Ney on foot at the side of Friant) commanding the 1st Battalion of the 3rd Grenadiers.

Harlet commanding the battalion of the 4th Grenadiers. Michel commanding the 1st Battalion of the 3rd Chasseurs.

Henrion commanding the 4th Chasseurs.

Cambronne commanding the last square on the field, the 2nd Battalion of the 1st Chasseurs.

Napoleon in the centre of the 1st Battalion of the 1st Grenadiers.

The last survivor of the Old Guard was named Vivien; born at Lyon in 1786, he served in 22 campaigns and died in his home town in 1899.

1st Regiment of Grenadiers à Pied

Effective strength: approximately 1,500 men.

Commandant: Petit.

1st Battalion: Laubers (?).

2nd Battalion: Combes.

Porte Aigle: (?).

Tambour Major: Capitaine-tambour-major Senot.

2nd Regiment of Grenadiers à Pied

Effective strength: 1,000 or 1,100 men.

Commandant: Christiani.

1st Battalion: Martentot.

2nd Battalion: Golzio.

Porte Aigle: (?).

Tambour Major: Stabert.

Note that among the Grenadiers figured Antoine Deleau who was a candidate for the mayor's office at Vicq (Nord) in 1862.

3rd Regiment of Grenadiers à Pied

Effective Strength: (?).

Commandant: Poret de Morvan.

1st Battalion: Guilleman.

2nd Battalion: Belcourt (8 o'clock in the evening only 300 men left). Porte Aigle: (?).

4th Regiment of Grenadiers à Pied

Effective strength: (?).

Commandant: Harlet.

1st Battalion: (?).

2nd Battalion; Destroyed on the 16th.

1st Regiment of Chasseurs à Pied

Effective strength: 36 officers and 1,270 NCOs and Chasseurs.

Commandant: Cambronne.

1st Battalion: Duuring (a Dutchman, old chief of battalion of the 3rd (Dutch) Grenadiers in 1811).

2nd Battalion: Lamouret, Lt Morel, Lt F. Arnoud.

Porte Aigle: Lt en Premier Martin.

Tambour Major: Dumet.

2nd Regiment of Chasseurs à Pied

Effective strength: 1,239 men.

Commandant: Pelet.

1st Battalion: Colomban – in 1811 Captain of the 1st Company of the 1st Battalion of the 4th Voltigeurs. Capt Augis, Capt Heuillot.

2nd Battalion: Mompez. Lt en premier Lepage, Lt en premier Gourakel, Lt Langlois, Lt Baril.

3rd Regiment of Chasseurs à Pied

Effective strength: 1,040 men.

Commandant: Mallet.

1st Battalion: Angelet, Capt Minal, Capt Prax formerly Adjutant Major of the 3rd Chasseurs.

2nd Battalion: Cardinal (killed). Ex-Captain of the 4th Company of the 1st Battalion of the 1st Chasseurs in 1811.

4th Regiment of Chasseurs à Pied

Effective strength: 1,128 men.

Commandant: Henrion.

1st Battalion: Agnes (killed). Former chef de Bataillon of the 8th Voltigeurs.

Messieurs Brouillet and Planke give the following sources for this information:

Le Champ de Bataille de Waterloo, by J. Augeand Louis Garros.

Napoleon and the Imperial Guard

Waterloo an Illustrated Guide

Waterloo – the end of the World

Napoleon at Waterloo

The Secret of Waterloo

Waterloo 1815, by Henri Houssaye.

The Hundred Days, by A. Brett James.

Anatomy of Glory, by Henri Lachouque.

Waterloo, by Henri Lachouque.

Planches Hourtoulle, Nos 57, 68, 59.

Planches Rousselot, 40, 103, 63, 95, 58, 31.

History of the Consulate and the Empire, by Thiers.

Napoleon, by A. Castetot.

Napoleon, by Louis Madelin.

Bulletins of the SCFH 3/56, 5/62, 3/62, 4/59, 5/59, 3/59, 2/63, 2/60, 1/60, and the Special numbers of February 1960 and 6/1966.

Bulletins of the Societe de la Sabretache 145/1905 and 146/1905.

History of the Imperial Guard, by Marco St Hilaire.

Plates: La Garde Imperiale, by Jean Auge, now out of print.

History of the Campaign of 1815, by Quinet 1862.

Journal of Capitaine Coignet.

Revue de la Societe des Aais du Musee de L'Armee, 69/1965.

Customs and traditions

Capitaine Hippolyte de Mauduit in his publication *Les Derniers Jours de la Grande Armée* has made the following commentary on how the regiments of Grenadiers were organised:

The 1st Regiment comprised the Grenadiers of the Elba Guard. They were formed into the first company of the 1st Battalion. The remainder of the companies were completed by the *Grenadiers de France* (the Bourbon Royal Guard) most of whom had been members of the old 1st Regiment anyway. The most senior NCOs and Grenadiers formed the nucleus of each company, some NCOs were taken from line regiments and became Grenadiers. Each regiment was supposed to have companies of 200 men but they varied between 150 and 200.

The height of the Grenadiers varied between 5 ft 6 inches and 5 ft 8 inches but some were as short as 5 ft 4 inches.

The average age of the Grenadier was 35 years, a small number were 30 years' old but over 300 had served on 20 or 25 campaigns. Many of the NCOs had seen service in line regiments and some of the senior NCOs were promoted to commissioned rank and drafted to join the Young Guard.

A Grenadier had the rank of a sergeant in a line regiment. A corporal the rank of a Sergeant-Major in a line regiment. The sergeants and sergent-fourrier (quarter-master-sergeants) ranked with an adjudant-sous-officier in the line. The sergeant-major carried the rank of a sous-lieutenant in the line. All Imperial Guard officers carried a rank in the line one higher than their Guard status.

No officer in the Guard wore any rank distinction other than the Guard pattern epaulettes with the device of his corps on the field of the crescent. Under the First Restoration in 1814 the officers who had served in the former Imperial Guard conserved their superior grade and refused to wear rank distinctions on their shoulders. The NCOs and corporals were also permitted to wear their old rank distinctions.

It was traditional for the Corps of Grenadiers and Chasseurs to furnish HQ and Palace Guards for the Emperor, the battalions were relieved every three months and vied with each other for the privilege. The music and the pioneers always appeared on guard mounting parades. In summer the guard mounting parade was at 9 o'clock in the morning in the palace courtyard. In the winter months it was held at mid-day. In times of peace the Grenadiers were barracked at the Caserne at Courbevoie and the 3rd (Dutch) Regiment at Versailles. During the First Restoration the Grenadiers of France were stationed at Versailles and later at Metz. When on guard they did an eight hour duty, two hours on patrol. Each day an NCO was detailed to stand at the bridge leading to the barrack gate to check the appearance of the Grenadiers going out to town. During the first Restoration the two regiments of Chasseurs were formed into the 'Corps Royal des Chasseurs à Pied de France'. Some Fusilier-Chasseurs were transferred with them. The Royal Corps was garrisoned at the caserne at Nancy.

For entry into the Chasseurs it was expected that the recruit had seen service in the Light Infantry, to have five years active service and to be 5 ft 5 inches tall.

In 1815 the 1st Regiment was formed from the *Elba Guard* and the Royal Corps. The Elba contingent

naturally formed the 1st company and the nucleus of the remainder. The three other regiments of Chasseurs were raised from NCOs and senior soldiers from the regiments of the line with especial regard to the Light Infantry élite corps like the 7th and 15th. Although the Chasseurs were expected to be 5 ft 5 inches tall there was difficulty in finding sufficient men of this height or recruits with the proper length of service to warrant admission to the élite Guard.

The Chasseurs were garrisoned at Rueil, one battalion always being on service with a matching Grenadier battalion at the Emperor's HQ. It was because of this that the Emperor got to know so many of the Old Guardsmen by name, always stopping to enquire the sentry's name, age, length of service, etc. One battalion was garrisoned at the Parthemont. Rue de Grenelle St Germain and in 1811 was at the Military Academy for a while. As soldiers in the field the Chasseurs performed the same function as the Grenadiers.

The Council of Administration of the Corps comprised the Lt General of the 1st Regiment who acted as President, and the major, together with the longest serving captain of each regiment.

A Grenadier was paid 80 centimes a day, a corporal 1 franc 66 centimes, a sergeant 2 francs 22 centimes and a sergeant major 2 francs 66 centimes. The particular 'coquetterie' of the Grenadiers were their gold earrings. These were dispensed on the first day of their arrival at



There was no standard issue of water canteens to the French forces – individuals supplied their own. Gourds or flasks were favourite. Upper Left is a captured British wood water bottle.



A drummer of the 2nd Regiment of Chasseurs in full dress.

the regimental depot. They were 'de riguer' and one could say obligatory. A comrade was detailed to pierce the lobe and put in the keeper. Later a ring of gold the size of a three franc piece was inserted and never taken off. Many of the Grenadiers and Chasseurs were tattooed with flowery attributes to their loved one or to the Emperor. Many had grenades or bugle horns on the backs of their hands and on their fingers.

Eagles and their Standards

When Napoleon returned from Elba he decided that the new Army, including the Imperial Guard, should have new eagles. On the 'Champs de Mars' on June 1, 1815, the ceremony of presentation took place. The

Emperor had decided that the former practice of allocating eagles to each battalion should cease. In future, at least as far as the Guard were concerned there was to be one eagle for each arm. For the Corps of Grenadiers there was therefore one eagle only and similarly one for the Chasseurs. The Marins had no new eagle, probably because they were still such a small unit. It is not known whether the Genie were allocated an eagle or not.

The new eagles resembled the former bronze gilded pattern but the design of the standard was much simplified. The glory of the former highly decorated flags with their palm leaf embroidery and arabesques was gone. The new flags were purely functional additions to the eagle emblem of the corps and quite simple in design. Unfortunately with one exception all the 1815 pattern standards of the eagles of the Guard which were presented by Napoléon on June 1, 1815, have been destroyed and their design can now only be conjectural. It has been said that the Grenadiers never carried the 1815 eagle and standard at all but instead carried the old 'Fontainebleu Adieu' Eagle and standard that had been preserved in 1814 by General Pelet. Incidentally this Eagle still exists and was presented to the Musée de l'Armée in 1927 by the good General's heirs.

The only Imperial Guard standard of this period which has been traced is that of the Horse Artillery, this ancient flag is now in the Brunon Collection in Marseilles and, if we accept that as a pattern for the rest of the flags carried by the Guard, they were unique in not having the ubiquitous citation which appeared on all the other flags issued to the Line Regiments. However, in the absence of any other evidence it appears unlikely that the Emperor, for all the speed with which the issue of eagles and flags had to be carried out, would have allowed his beloved 'Vielle Garde' to have had a sub-standard provision of Eagles and Standards. It is therefore considered most likely that the Grenadiers and Chasseurs carried eagles and standards of a pattern as follows:

Grenadiers

An Eagle on a blue staff with gold cords and tassels and a tricolour cravat with gold fringe. The flag, tricolour, blue next to the staff, white and red in the fly with a narrow border of simple gold leaf embroidery around the edge, sprays of palm in the corners and a thin gold fringe. On the face in gold painted letters, outlined in black in each case the words L'EMPEREUR/NAPOLEON/AU CORPS/DES GRENADEIERS A PIED/DE LA GARDE IMPERIALE, and on the reverse the battle honours MARENGO/ULM/AUSTERLITZ IENA/EYLAU FRIEDLAND/ECKMUHL ESSLING/WAGRAM SMOLENSK/MOSKOWA VIENNE/BERLIN/MADRID-MOSCOU.

The staff was 245 cm long and the flag 120 cm × 120 cm.

The eagle and standard of the Chasseurs would have been the same except that the words 'Corps des Chasseurs à Pied' would replace those of the Grenadiers. In the case of the Chasseurs the Eagle was carried by the 9th and 10th Companies of the 2nd Chasseurs. In the retreat from Plancenoit the Porte-Aigle covered it in black crepe which he had acquired from a house. The companies were eventually reduced to a handful of men and the Eagle was in danger until Pelet called for help and the Chasseurs rallied round their sacred emblem.

The full dress belt in which the Eagle was supported was red for the Grenadiers with gold edging and fringe and decorated with grenades and sprays of palm and in

green with similar decorations and bugle horns for the Chasseurs. If the foregoing is correct, and all the evidence points to the allocation of eagles and standards being on this basis, it makes a nonsense of some of the reports of the Allies that 'the Guard advanced up the slope with their eagles held aloft'. For the eagle of the Grenadiers would surely have been with the 1st Regiment and the eagle of the Chasseurs was at Plancenoit. The battalions which took part in the final attack probably carried the 'fanions'. These were small rectangular flags on short black staffs thrust into the muzzles of muskets of senior NCOs. For the Grenadiers they would have been red with a black painted flaming grenade in the centre and four similar grenades one in each corner. For the Chasseurs a green flag with either black or yellow bugle horns. The 'campaign fanion' of the Marins was crimson with gold bees and a gold anchor in the centre with a gold fringe. A further fanion of the Marins, which is now in the Brunon Collection, is blue with a gold eagle in the centre with a

crown above and grasping a thunderbolt in its claws. This flag has an anchor in each corner with a narrow gold border in the form of a rope linking the anchors.

It is believed that the Marins went on campaign with their old 1811 pattern flag. After the battle the eagle was detached from the staff and the emblem was sold in London. The flag is now in the Brunon Collection in Marseilles but the eagle itself has been lost.

Regimental Marches

1st, 2nd, 3rd, and 4th Regiments of Grenadiers: 'La Grenadiere'.

1st, 2nd, 3rd, and 4th Regiments of Chasseurs: 'La Carabiniere'.

Marins: 'Brante-bas general des Marins'.

All played 'La Victoire est a nous' and 'Veillons au Salut de L'Empire' when on parade at the palace or at headquarters.



Above: Other ranks' shako, Young Guard. Upper Right: Officer's shako, Young Guard. Right: Officers' shako, Voltigeurs of the Guard.





Corporal of the 2nd Regiment Grenadiers à Pied. This figure illustrates the typical service dress of the Old Guard regiments. The white cords and flounders and the red plume have been removed from the bearskin and the black leather pouch has been covered in white cloth with black stencilled devices.

Drum Major, Grenadiers à Pied. The term 'Tambour Major' dated back to before the corps was formed in the Consulate Period. Under the old Bourbon Régime the appointment was titled the 'Chef-Tambour' or even 'Tambour-Colonel'. In full dress the Drum Major had a superb gold embroidered dress coat, waistcoat and breeches but during the Hundred Days it is very unlikely that this superb costume was re-introduced.

